Submission ID: 6994

Status â€“ Oppose

Following on from my initial representation I would like to find answers to some of the issues I have regarding this scheme.

Safety Issues â€“ National Highways has known for many years that the A417 is an accident black spot and hence the proposed scheme. While I understand the need to find a solution to this problem, I fail to understand why in the first instance National Highways has not introduced any warning signage on this route or put in place lower speed limits. Could traffic lights not be introduced at the Birdlip crossing? Surely these measures should have been trialed/put in place a long time ago.

I refer to TR010056-000602-7.9 Technical Appraisal Report (February 2018) Page 44, Para 3.8. The Technical Appraisal Report, page 44 gives details about the temperature and rainfall. Can the ExA be appraised of the analysis that has been undertaken with regards to the poor visibility that frequently affects the proposed route, and what the implications are of increasing the speed limit in this area on road safety?

I refer to Page 27, Fig 2.3, Scheme Assessment Report (March 2019). I believe that safe spacing of vehicles is the solution to the Missing Link not speed.
A car at 50mph needs less braking distance - 38m than a car at 70mph - 75m, therefore at a lower speed limit more vehicles can be accommodated on the same stretch of road. â€œIf people maintain a safe headway, a motorway can carry 15% more vehicles per hour at 40mph than at 70mph. The journeys take longer but the benefit is that more people can travel and still be safe. This is the reason we have variable speed limits on motorwaysâ€•. Smarter Cambridge Transport, January 2021.

Given that the peak volume of traffic occurs for up to 4 hours per day on the Missing Link, it would be more realistic to consider a lower speed limit to carry more people at these peak flow times versus developing a new road with a 70mph speed limit that will be under-used for 20 hours of the day.

The introduction of smart motorways was to manage traffic flow at peak times and to keep motorways moving, safely. Grant Shapps acknowledges that â€œto achieve safe roads, technology has to be installed to smooth traffic flow with variable speed limits and messages warning motorists ahead of incidents displayed on electronic signsâ€•. (Smart Motorway Safety, Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan, 2020). Option 30 doesn't include any of this technology.
Can the ExA be appraised as to why Option 30 is being pursued, which has a proposed fixed 70mph speed limit, when other infrastructure projects around the country, the M6, M4 and M1 for example are being redesigned to reduce speed or manage speed via Smart technology to improve flow?
Can the ExA be appraised as to why peak flow cannot be managed in Option 12 by the proposed 50mph speed limit?

Preferred Route â€“ I refer to TR010056-000608-7.4 Scheme Assessment Report (March 2019) Page 12. The Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) states that although both routes are similar in most respects from an objective environmental assessment and appraisal, Option 12 is more likely to comply with the relevant policy requirements within the NPSNN than Option 30 relating to cultural heritage, geology and soils, population, health and climate. Considering COP26 and other climate pressures, can the ExA be appraised as to why these benefits seem to be ignored in the

choice of route?

I also refer to TR010056-000608-7.4 Scheme Assessment Report (March 2019) Page 126, Para 7.3.3. Both options are forecast to reduce journey times along the A417 in both directions compared to the â€˜Do Minimum' scenarios. Option 12 has a mitigation measure of a reduced speed limit. Can the ExA be appraised as to whether modelling has been undertaken to assess the traffic flow, journey times and environmental impact if Option 12 was designed for a lower design speed, whilst at the same time delivering a safe and resilient free-flowing road?